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| Inspection handbook  Methodology and guidance covering inspection work  January 2021 |

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Who we are

HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate inspects prosecution services, providing evidence to make the prosecution process better and more accountable.

We have a statutory duty to inspect the work of the   
Crown Prosecution Service and Serious Fraud Office.   
By special arrangement, we also share our expertise   
with other prosecution services in the UK and overseas.

We are independent of the organisations we inspect, and   
our methods of gathering evidence and reporting are   
open and transparent. We do not judge or enforce; we   
inform prosecution services’ strategies and activities by presenting evidence of good practice and issues to   
address. Independent inspections like these help to   
maintain trust in the prosecution process.

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# The Inspectorate’s purpose, values and principles for inspections

## Purpose

HMCPSI’s purpose is to enhance the quality of justice through independent inspection and assessment that improves the effectiveness of prosecution services and provides assurances to Ministers, Government and the public. HMCPSI has a statutory duty to inspect the work of the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office. By special arrangement, it also shares its expertise with other prosecution services in the UK and overseas.

HMCPSI is independent of the organisations it inspects and has methods of gathering evidence and reporting that are open and transparent. Independent inspections like those carried out by HMCPSI help to maintain trust in the prosecution process.

HMCPSI strives to achieve excellence in all aspects of its activities and in particular to provide consistent professional inspection[[1]](#footnote-1) and evaluation processes together with advice and guidance, all measured against recognised quality standards and defined performance levels. In order to achieve this we want to be an organisation which:

* performs to the highest possible standards
* inspires pride
* commands respect
* works in partnership with other criminal justice inspectorates and agencies but without compromising its independence
* values its staff
* seeks continuous improvement.

## Values

HMCPSI employees endeavour to be true to our core values in all that we do.

#### A professional approach

We act fairly, honestly and responsibly in our dealings with our stakeholders, especially the organisations we inspect.

#### An open-minded attitude

We approach our work in a spirit of enquiry, without prejudice, and strive to be constructive in our responses.

#### A collegiate culture

We are enthusiastic about each other’s successes and proactive about pursuing our own opportunities.

HMCPSI aims to demonstrate integrity, objectivity and professionalism at all times and in all aspects of work. Our findings are based on information, evidence and data that has been thoroughly researched, verified and evaluated according to consistent standards and criteria.

## The principles of inspection

Our principles of inspection accord with the Government’s policy on inspection of public services, which was published in July 2003 (Crown copyright 2003 reference 27881/0703/D8).

#### The purpose of improvement

Our inspections are designed to contribute to the improvement of the prosecution service being inspected. This guides the focus, methodology, reporting and follow-up of the inspection. Our reports recognise good performance and identify good practice. In framing recommendations, aspects for improvement and issues requiring management attention, we address any failure appropriately and proportionately.

#### A focus on outcomes

We consider service delivery and how it affects the prosecution services’ partners in the criminal justice system, victims and witnesses, and defendants and their representatives, rather than concentrating solely on internal management arrangements.

#### The user perspective

The inspection is delivered with a clear focus on the experience of the prosecution services’ partners in the criminal justice system, stakeholders and the public, as well as on internal management arrangements. We seek to encourage innovation and diversity and are not solely compliance-based.

#### Proportional to risk

We risk-assess CPS Areas in order to modify the extent of inspections according to the quality of the business units’ performance. Resources are concentrated on areas of greatest risk, although we also assess some better performing units, particularly when seeking potential good practice.

#### Self-assessment

Self-assessment is used as a core tool to varying degrees, dependent on the type of inspection being conducted. In the course of the inspection we will challenge any self-assessment where necessary.

#### Impartial evidence

Evidence is gathered from live and finalised cases, court observations, documentation and interviews. Whether the evidence is quantitative or qualitative, we seek to validate it and assess its credibility. We seek the views of those with direct experience and involvement with the prosecution services, and do not rely on second-hand perceptions or views.

#### Inspection criteria

We set out the criteria we use to form judgements. These have been passed to the prosecution services we inspect and are available to individual business units. We publish these on our website.

#### Openness

We are open about our processes, actively seek feedback from those we inspect, and are willing to take any complaint seriously. We have internal quality assurance processes and have commissioned reviews of our inspections.

#### Value for money

We look for evidence that the prosecution services have arrangements in place to deliver the service efficiently and effectively. We try to demonstrate that inspection delivers benefits commensurate with cost, including the cost to those inspected. We work with other inspectorates on cross-cutting issues, in the interests of greater cost effectiveness and reducing the burden on those inspected.

#### Continually learning from experience

We seek to become increasingly effective by continually learning from experience. We evaluate our own inspections, assess our own impact on the inspected organisations’ ability to improve through feedback and follow-up inspections, and share best practice internally and with other criminal justice inspectorates.

## Our principles of conduct

We will:

* adopt an open-minded and supportive approach
* produce balanced and clear evidence-based reports
* be honest and clear when we ask questions, and consistent and fair when we make judgements
* be accurate in our judgements, based on collecting and assessing evidence properly
* be sensitive in recognising the effect our judgements and comments may have on the organisations we inspect
* engage with the media to ensure that our reports are understood and reach a wider audience
* support the properly considered acceptance of risk-taking and experimentation, and take account of the need for a more holistic approach to criminal justice issues.

We will carry out our work so that we help the inspected organisations to be as efficient and effective as possible. We aim to ensure that the process of inspection and the report that follows are constructive and useful. Inspection is an independent assessment with the intention of helping the prosecution agencies develop and achieve their aims.

We bear in mind the effect our inspections have on the staff whose organisation we are inspecting. We will endeavour to minimise the burden of the inspection on those inspected. We will be open about our practices and procedures. We will ensure that all aspects of our work are free from bias and discrimination. We will treat all people politely and fairly, according to the principles of fairness and in line with our values.

We will monitor and evaluate our own performance and try to improve the way we do our job. Our inspectors will always be ready to receive comments from anybody about the way we work. We seek feedback and are keen to improve.

## Types of inspection work

HMCPSI carries out a number of different types of inspection work. We undertake:

* CPS Area performance inspections
* thematic inspections of the CPS and the SFO
* joint inspection work with other criminal justice inspectorates
* evidence gathering work designed to provide internal intelligence that can be used to target inspection work.

## Our governance structure

The Crown Prosecution Inspectorate Act 2000 requires the Attorney General (AG) to appoint Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of the Crown Prosecution Service. Under the Act, the Chief Inspector is obliged to inspect, or arrange for the inspection of, the CPS and to report the findings to the AG. In 2014, the remit of the Chief Inspector was extended to cover the Serious Fraud Office. The Chief Inspector must also submit an annual report to the AG which is laid before Parliament.

The Chief Inspector may appoint inspectors and other staff to assist in the discharge of the functions of the organisation.

HMCPSI has a hierarchy of governance bodies to advise the Chief Inspector, implement strategies and procedures, and allow us to effectively run the organisation.

#### Strategic Advisory Board

The Strategic Advisory Board (SAB) is chaired by the Chief Inspector and includes the CPS’ Chief Executive Officer, the SFO’s Chief Operating Officer, the Director/Deputy Head of Office from the Attorney General’s Office, and HMCPSI’s Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection), Deputy Chief Inspector (Business Services) and Executive Support to the Chief Inspector. Whilst the Chief Inspector is responsible for all decision making in HMCPSI, the SAB advises the Chief Inspector and helps inform his decisions about the inspection programme. The SAB offers stakeholders’ views to HMCPSI on how its inspection programmes and plans can best meet its statutory functions in a way that meets stakeholder requirements and benefits the criminal justice system.

The SAB meets bi-annually. Its advice is considered by the Chief Inspector and Senior Management Team (SMT) and cascaded by the usual SMT communication routes.

**Senior Management Team**

The SMT are responsible for advising the Chief Inspector on the effective running of the corporate and inspection business. Working together, the SMT agree strategies for inspection and people which will be signed off by the Chief Inspector. The SMT make all resourcing and financial decisions and ensure that corporate risk is identified and managed.

The SMT includes the Chief Inspector, Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and the Deputy Chief Inspector (Business Services). The group meets monthly and has weekly catch-up meetings. Messages are shared in weekly blogs issued by members of the SMT. The Operational Delivery Group receives an update from the SMT and information is disseminated to all staff. Any priority messages from the SMT are communicated via emails to all staff.

**Operational Delivery Group**

The Operational Delivery Group advises the Chief Inspector. The group produces the plans to deliver the inspection and people strategies agreed by the Chief Inspector. This group has some delegated decision making authority regarding operational matters such as the allocation of resource to inspections and the timing of inspections.

The group is the link between the strategic and operational decision making bodies and the staff, ensuring the effective communication of decisions. It may commission specific task and delivery groups to deliver on particular projects. Each grade 6 staff member in the group has a portfolio responsibility. The group is chaired by one of the grade 6s and is attended by the Deputy Chief Inspector (Business Services), the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and all the grade 6s in the organisation. It meets every six weeks and decisions are communicated to staff, usually by email the next day.

## Business planning process

The HMCPSI business plan and the programme of inspections are developed from contributions from a number of sources.

Each year, a longlist of potential inspection topics is developed by asking inspectors for their views on what aspects of work would benefit from inspection, based on the work they have undertaken and examination of performance management data. In the final quarter of the financial year, we have a statutory obligation to consult our stakeholders on a list of potential inspection topics.

Following feedback from stakeholders, discussions take place about the final list of inspections for the following year. Although we are independent, we give weight to the views of our stakeholders and, as far as possible, incorporate those issues we consider to be most in need of addressing when planning the inspection programme. Consideration is also given to joint inspection work that will need to be covered during the year.

From the long list of potential topics, the Chief Inspector and the SMT decide on the inspections we intend to carry out during the next financial year. These topics are set out in our business plan (and form a general list of the inspection programme). The programme remains flexible throughout the year in order to accommodate urgent work that we may be asked to undertake at relatively short notice.

# Inspection process overview

* 1. So we can report with confidence about the quality of casework and processes, we have detailed working methods. Details of these procedures are covered in the following chapters. The methodology we use may include the following:
* considering management information about those we inspect
* considering documents and other material which helps us to understand and assess general and casework performance
* examining and evaluating a cross-section of case files against set criteria and standards
* interviewing senior managers and other members of staff of the inspected organisation
* surveying staff and partner agencies
* visiting offices and observation of working practices[[2]](#footnote-2)
* visiting courts to observe how cases are prosecuted
* talking to representatives of other criminal justice agencies and third sector organisations and court users, or seeking written contributions from them.
  1. There is a rigorous internal quality assurance process in place that aims to ensure the consistency and integrity of the reports published.
  2. The different types of inspection – Area performance inspection, thematic inspection and joint inspection – have some features that are unique to the particular type, but all share a common overall process. The chapters that follow set out the phases of this process in detail. This handbook covers only those inspections carried out by HMCPSI alone.
  3. HMCPSI also carries out evidence gathering exercises which are designed to provide specific intelligence around topics we think may require an inspection. This process helps us formulate the scope of an inspection or determine whether it is a priority topic for inspection.
  4. All inspections will have a lead inspector, team members, a quality assurer (QA) and Business Service Team support. Some inspections may also have a deputy lead inspector. The QA role applies at all phases of inspection, not just the report writing phase.
  5. The principles of inspection, together with the vision and values that are applicable to all inspectorate work, are covered in chapter 1.

## Inspection phases

* 1. The following is an overview of the key phases and tasks which are common in all types of inspection, in order.

### Scoping/planning

* High level scoping work with inspected body to develop inspection question
* Detailed scope drafted and agreed
* Inspection folders set up
* Inspection framework developed/agreed
* Methodology developed, including any databases and potential surveys
* Equality impact assessment completed
* High level inspection timescales agreed
* High level resource allocation

### Setting up

* Commissioning letter sent
* Conflict declarations made
* Project plan completed
* Evidence and evaluation note (EEN) created
* File sample extracted/requested (where appropriate)
* Information requested from inspected body
* Surveys dispatched (where appropriate)
* Fact-finding interviews (internal or external requested if appropriate)

### Pre-on-site

* Responsibilities of team agreed
* Early fact-finding interviews, internal and external, to inform on-site focus
* On-site timetable arranged and agreed
* Travel and accommodation arranged (via Business Services Team)
* File examination commenced after consistency exercises completed and dip sampling conducted throughout the process
* Documents and data analysed
* Survey (if used) responses analysed
* Evidence capture commenced – using EEN
* Pre-inspection team meeting(s) which will include the QA

### On-site

* Interviews with internal staff and external representatives
* Court observations (if applicable)
* Process checks (if applicable)
* Peer review (if applicable)
* Interim judgement meetings with the team
* Continue to complete EENs

### Evaluation

* EENs finalised, including preliminary judgements
* Judgements discussed and confirmed at a team meeting involving the QA and Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection)
* Emerging findings document drafted
* Quality assurance of findings completed and secondary data checking commenced
* Emerging findings meeting with inspected body representatives

### Report writing

* Report drafted
* Draft report to team members for comment and amendment by lead as appropriate
* Internal quality assurance of draft report by QA → Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) → Chief Inspector
* Draft report to inspected body for comment
* Report comments received and response drafted from inspected body
* Response quality assured/report amended as appropriate
* Optional meeting with inspected body for final comment
* Report to publications company for layout and proofreading
* Response and final report to inspected body
* Summary of points drafted to include in the press release, website summary and emails to stakeholders and Attorney General’s Office Communications

### Publication and finalisation

* Final report to publications team
* Press release drafted, along with the website summary and stakeholder email
* Inspection folders cleared in accordance with retention policy
* Report published
* Inspection evaluation exercise conducted with the team
* Thank you letters and report sent to those interviewed
  1. Whilst all inspections follow this process, there will be certain inspections that deviate from the processes and timings set out in the following chapters, because of the particular circumstances of the inspection.

# Scoping/planning phase

Key outcomes

A high level and a detailed scoping paper

Inspection framework

Methodology developed (including any databases and potential surveys)

Inspection folders set up

Equality impact assessment completed

Project timescales agreed

High level resources agreed

CPS Areas chosen for on-site visits

* 1. The scope of the inspection needs to be agreed in this phase. If undertaking a series of inspections, such as the Area inspection programme, the scope and framework is likely to be fixed at the start so that all can be judged against the same criteria and reported on fairly throughout the programme.
  2. There is no exact timing on how long an initial scoping exercise may take, but it should include the inspector researching the inspection issues by examining the inspected body’s policy and guidance, consulting inspectorate colleagues, and speaking with Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)/Serious Fraud Office (SFO) policy leads if appropriate.
  3. Once it has been cleared internally, the initial scoping paper will be submitted to the inspected body for immediate thoughts. Work will then commence on a detailed scoping paper. A framework will be developed along with parts of the methodology, such as the file examination questions, if appropriate. Overall this phase is likely to take a minimum of four weeks if there is limited involvement of stakeholders in the process.

## Scoping for inspections

* 1. Scoping work for all inspections follows a broadly similar process. For Area inspections which are part of an Area inspection programme, the scoping process will have been carried out at the start of the programme and will follow the same structure. The same scope will apply in each Area inspected.
  2. Thematic inspection work requires a bespoke approach. Each thematic inspection will have a tailored methodology and a series of bespoke products. All thematic inspections require a formal scoping process to be followed. The scope will contain the range of topics to be included and the most appropriate methodology. There is, however, a standard approach to the scoping paper.
  3. The scoping phase is normally split into two stages, the first resulting in an initial scoping paper and the second in a more detailed version. The initial scoping paper is submitted to the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) for discussion by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and for notification and discussion with the client organisation. Subjects to be scoped will be set out in the HMCPSI business plan. The initial scoping document identifies the aspects of the subject to be inspected. These papers are shared with the CPS and SFO and are usually discussed at quarterly meetings with the CPS’s Director of Operations and the Directors of Legal Services or the Chief Operating Officer at the SFO.
  4. Once the initial paper has been agreed in principle, the inspected body will provide a user expert to liaise with the inspector. They will develop a more detailed scoping paper which sets out the purpose and aims of the inspection and confirms the key question the inspection will answer. Arrangements are in place for both the CPS and SFO to volunteer liaison or contact points from within their organisation to assist in the development of the scope. To initiate this, the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) will write to the relevant inspected body with the initial scoping document.
  5. An equality impact assessment (EIA) is a tool to help ensure that the policies, procedures and functions of any public organisation are working as intended and to the benefit of all – whether they be members of staff, people who come into contact with the organisation or the community at large. The use of EIAs will help us meet our legal obligations under the public equality duties.
  6. For the Inspectorate, an EIA is a systematic method of assessing the effects that our inspection work is having or is likely to have on groups or individuals in respect of the protected characteristics – that is, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief (including non-belief), sex, and sexual orientation. An EIA is compulsory for all inspection types and must be completed early in the process.

## Inspection framework

* 1. The inspection framework is a key inspection tool, crucial to producing a high quality report. The framework is drafted following agreement of the initial scoping document, which will contain the inspection question and aims that form the core of the framework.
  2. The framework provides a structure against which inspectors gather evidence in a consistent way, providing findings that cover the scope and answer the key inspection questions. A good framework makes it easier to understand what evidence we are looking for and what constitutes good evidence.
  3. All types of inspection require a bespoke framework. The framework provides a foundation for the inspection, and transparency and commonality in understanding of what is being inspected, since it is shared with the inspected body and other interested parties. The framework should be readily understandable, avoid jargon and use plain English.
  4. The key inspection questions and aims identified in the initial scoping paper are used to identify the main sections for the inspection framework. These sections are headed by a high level question or criterion that we need to provide evidence for in order to meet the scope of the inspection.
  5. For each main inspection criterion, there will be a number of sub-criteria which identify different key aspects that go towards answering the main criteria. These are underpinning questions that further identify, and provide a clearer understanding of, what HMCPSI is inspecting. There is no optimum number of sub-criteria but they should provide a framework that is comprehensive, cohesive and understandable.
  6. The lead inspector, or the inspector nominated to develop the framework, will work with the person nominated by the inspected body to liaise with HMCPSI in this phase. This will ensure that the framework is comprehensive and provides maximum value to the inspected body, since it is a means of informing performance, service delivery and any improvements.
  7. The lead inspector will provide inspectors assigned to the inspection with any guidance or training necessary to ensure a consistent understanding of the framework criteria and sub-criteria.
  8. The final framework will be agreed with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) with reference to the Chief Inspector. A copy of the framework always accompanies the commissioning letters sent to the inspected body. The framework will also be published in full on the HMCPSI website. Discussion of the framework will form part of the liaison with the contacts in each part of the inspected body, to make sure there is a full understanding of the framework.
  9. A draft timetable for the inspection phases will be developed after the scoping paper has been submitted and resources for the inspection team have been agreed. This is not the project plan for the inspection, but an informed estimate of the timescales for each phase taking into account the inspectors available at each stage.

## Inspection folders set up

* 1. All documents and data created and received as part of the inspection process are saved into the appropriate folder on the Inspectorate drive. This forms an accessible record and audit trail of all the information the inspection is based on. This information will be deleted at the appropriate time, in line with our retention policy.

## Methodology development

* 1. The lead inspector, often in conjunction with the inspection team, will develop a tailored methodology to be used during the inspection. This may include:
* a bespoke file examination questionnaire (including the core question set in a CPS casework examination) and guidance for completion of the file questionnaire
* a template for on-site process checks
* online surveys for people both from the inspected body and from external agencies who will be asked to contribute by survey
* interviews with key individuals and focus groups of staff
* key lines to cover in interview documents
* court observation checks.
  1. Some work on the development of the methodology may take place during this phase, involving the lead inspector and any team members if they are brought into the inspection at this time.
  2. The lead inspector will work with the Business and Data Support Officer (BDSO) to identify any data available to the Inspectorate which will help inform the scope of the inspection.

# Setting up phase

Key outcomes

Commissioning letter sent

Team members appointed

Detailed project plan completed

Individual responsibilities of inspectors agreed

Conflict declarations submitted

Liaison person nominated by the inspected body

Access arranged to the inspected body’s digital systems at a local level, if necessary

Request and receipt of details of key contacts, documents and other management information

Evidence and evaluation note (EEN) drafted

File sample selected, if necessary

Survey questionnaires drafted, if appropriate, and sent to the inspected body’s staff and relevant external contacts

Interviews with external representatives requested, where appropriate

* 1. By this phase of the process, a lead inspector will have been appointed to the inspection. The lead inspector is the primary point of contact for the inspected body and is usually responsible for ensuring that the inspection runs in accordance with the timings in the project plan. The lead inspector will report to the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) or another inspector they allocate, or to the Chief Inspector. Throughout the inspection, the lead inspector will provide a weekly progress report against the agreed inspection project plan.
  2. Parts of the setting up and pre-on-site phases may run concurrently. Whilst the team are awaiting documents requested from the inspected body, work can commence on the file examination or on finalising surveys, for example. The amount of time this phase takes is often dependent on the size and extent of any file examination.

## Commissioning

* 1. A high level commissioning letter is sent to the inspected body along with the framework, question set, draft methodology and dates when the inspection team will be on site. Areas or divisions to be inspected will be provided with details of what is required: documents, timetable, name and details of our liaison person, and so on. Where the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is the inspected body, these local commissioning letters will be sent to the Areas and copied to the Director of Operations and/or Legal Services as appropriate, and to the HMCPSI liaison. Where the local commissioning letters are directed to the Chief Crown Prosecutors, the Area Business Manager of that Area will also be copied in and vice versa. In commissioning inspections in the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), the letter will be sent to the Chief Operating Officer, Chief Capability Officer and any others in the organisation as advised by the Chief Operating Officer.
  2. The inspected body is asked to nominate an individual to act as a liaison person: a specific point of contact (SPOC) at a local level for the inspection team. The liaison person may be asked to arrange access for the inspection team to relevant digital systems and to identify local stakeholders to allow the inspection to engage at a local level with key contacts.
  3. Where appropriate, letters are sent via email to local stakeholders to notify them of the inspection and inform them whom the team will ask to interview within their organisation/force. In some instances, letters may be sent asking for written comments from the stakeholder about their perception of the performance and effectiveness of the CPS in relation to the inspection subject.

## Project plan

* 1. All inspections are managed using project management principles to enable delivery of a timely and quality inspection report. Monitoring and reporting methods are built into the Inspectorate methodology.
  2. The project plan provides the start and completion date for every key phase of the inspection. It also sets out the underpinning milestones (tasks) required for each of the individual phases.
  3. Weekly reporting identifies any risks and issues, along with proposed resolutions, which are discussed with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection).
  4. Throughout the inspection, lessons being learned are identified and recorded. At the conclusion of the inspection, a review is held to consider organisational learning, as well as lessons that may be applied to future inspections.

## Conflict of interest

* 1. Once inspectors are allocated to the team, they declare any conflict of interest. The HMCPSI conflict of interest policy does not allow any inspector who has worked in the Area or relevant part of the organisation being inspected in the past two years to take part in the inspection. The individual member of staff should take a view in line with HMCPSI policy on whether it is professionally or ethically acceptable that they undertake any work on the inspection (or individual cases where they might feel there is a conflict).

## Responsibilities of team members

* 1. The lead inspector will agree with the team the specific responsibilities of individual members (which can include team members taking lead responsibility for specific sections of the report and possibly writing those sections in the report), including responsibilities for evidence analysis and evaluation.

## Early engagement with those being inspected

* 1. As part of early engagement, it is appropriate for the lead inspector (and lead administrator) to meet with the senior team and key individuals who are being inspected. This meeting will outline the scope of the inspection, answer any queries and start the process of engagement. It is also helpful at this stage to consider whether a meeting with the nominated SPOC would be useful in terms of ensuring a better understanding of what is needed from both sides to support the inspection. This should help to build a rapport to allow an easy flow of information and ensure, as far as possible, an effective visit to the Area.

### Information required from the inspected body

* 1. The lead inspector will work with the Business and Data Support Officer (BDSO) to identify any relevant performance information that will be produced internally. The lead will also liaise with the BDSO to identify any additional management information that will need to be requested from the inspected body.
  2. Requests for additional information from the inspected body should be kept to a minimum to lessen the burden of the inspection. The information requested will be specific and driven by the inspection framework which is developed in the scoping phase (see chapter 3). The inspection team will gather as much information as possible from systems that they have access to.
  3. If information requested from the inspected body is not received in accordance with agreed timescales, the HMCPSI administrator appointed to the inspection will make enquiries regarding the reasons for the delay. If delays continue, the matter must be escalated to the lead inspector, who will contact the inspected body and agree revised timescales. The lead inspector should immediately be alerted about any delay over three days. They must consider the effect on the timings in the project plan and initiate appropriate action. If necessary, the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) will raise any concerns with the HMCPSI inspection liaison.

## Evidence and evaluation note (EEN)

* 1. The EEN is the primary inspection document in which a summary of all relevant evidence is recorded. It reflects the sections and sub-sections set out in the framework.

## Case file selection

* 1. When a file sample is required, the lead inspector will work with the BDSO to produce a list of cases that fall into specific categories relevant to the inspection topic. The number of files to be examined is agreed as part of the setting up phase. The files are allocated to team members. The lead inspector will set out expectation levels, develop the dip sample approach and ensure that inspectors are aware of what they are required to do for the file examination. Inspectors will complete an electronic file questionnaire for each file and may be required to complete an associated file record sheet or electronic document to support their assessment (see chapter 5).
  2. Guidance to accompany the file examination questionnaire is produced to ensure that inspectors are all interpreting the questions in the same way. In addition, a file examination consistency exercise is carried out. The consistency exercise involves all inspectors who will be reading the files and can also involve senior members of the CPS, who are invited to the meetings to be aware of what the file examination involves and how it will be carried out. Consistency exercises may take place before commencing the file examination and also at points during the process.
  3. Before the consistency meeting, all participants read the same files against the questionnaire, using the guidance, and complete a file record sheet to assess where the performance sits within any criteria or descriptors. These findings are brought to the consistency meeting where individuals discuss the files, facilitated by the lead inspector. The meeting is chaired by the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection). Its purpose is to ensure that all inspectors involved have a better view of the standards to be applied.

## Surveys

* 1. To gain an insight into the key issues for the inspection, key external representatives and/or staff in the inspected body may be consulted on the issues involved in the inspection.
  2. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to undertake an online survey. Surveys are a cost effective way of consulting a large number of staff and external representatives, and should be considered as part of the evidence gathering techniques that can be used in an inspection. However, some views may be better obtained face-to-face or by telephone interview. Agreement to use surveys will be determined in the setting up phase.
  3. The lead inspector, in liaison with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection), decides which representatives will be invited to complete an online survey, if it has been decided that one should be carried out, and which individuals/groups will be invited to formal interviews.
  4. The inspected body will be formally notified of any staff surveys before they are sent out. Following this, the inspection administrator will send out the surveys and monitor the responses.
  5. Those key eExternal representatives who are asked to complete a survey will be carefully targeted to ensure they are in a position to address the specific issues identified. Contact details for the most appropriate external representatives will be obtained from the inspected body by the inspection administrator.
  6. The questions for the survey will be led by the inspection framework. The process of developing the survey and identifying the appropriate stakeholders to complete it will be done in collaboration with the inspected body’s liaison contact, as early as possible in the setting up phase. This will allow the survey to be sent out at an early point during this phase, and for responses to be received and analysed in good time before the on-site phase.
  7. The information from the surveys will inform inspectors and provide the option of following up particular responses with a more formal interview by video call, telephone or face-to-face if appropriate.
  8. Where a survey is sent out to external representatives, it will be accompanied by information outlining the purpose of the inspection. Similarly, where it is appropriate to send a survey to the inspected body’s staff, it should include an explanatory note. The inspection administrator will send out the survey to those identified and will monitor responses, providing updates and summaries to the lead inspector as requested.

## Request for early external interviews

* 1. In some instances, it makes sense to speak with key external stakeholders to gather evidence before on-site activity. If this approach is to be adopted, it will be agreed and set out as part of the setting up phase and included in the agreed inspection methodology. The inspection administrator will send out requests to any external stakeholders to take part in a telephone interview, monitor responses and add interviews to the timetable.

# Pre-on-site phase

Key outcomes

File examination commenced and completed

Key documents, performance data and management information analysed

Early engagement with those being inspected

Early fact finding interviews

Survey responses from staff and externals analysed

Evidence and evaluation note (EEN) completed with evidence from above activities and pre on-site issues identified

Team members’ travel and accommodation arranged

On-site timetable finalised, including interviews with external stakeholders and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)/Serious Fraud Office (SFO) staff, court observations and process checks, as necessary

Pre on-site team meetings held

* 1. Activities in the setting up and pre-on-site phases often run concurrently. The amount of time they take will depend primarily on the size and extent of the file examination and possible involvement of stakeholders during these phases.
  2. Team members will examine the relevant files on the CPS’s case management system (CMS) or SFO case systems and complete the file questionnaire on the database, completing file record sheets (FRS) as required. All data, including comments made as part of the file examination, is published on the HMCPSI website along with the report.

## File allocation

* 1. The majority of files examined will be on CMS. Inspectors will be allocated specific files to read by the lead inspector. Further allocation or reallocation of files will take place throughout this phase to make sure the file examination is completed in line with the timescales in the project plan.

## File examination consistency exercises

* 1. During the scoping and setting up phases, guidance will have been drafted to accompany the file examination questionnaire.
  2. In addition to this guidance, a number of regular consistency exercises are carried out to make sure that all inspectors who will be examining files are interpreting the questions in the same way and applying the same standards. An initial consistency exercise will be carried out before the start of the file examination.

## File examination

* 1. Inspectors complete the file examination using the HMCPSI database and in accordance with the guidance. Any issues or queries that arise during the file examination should be raised with the lead inspector and the resolution forwarded to all other inspectors involved in the file examination, to ensure a consistent approach.
  2. Individual inspectors are responsible for checking their own data at regular intervals to make sure it is complete and accurate. There will be dip sampling of completed file questionnaires at several points throughout this phase. Dip sampling will be carried out by the lead inspector and the quality assurer (QA). The results will be fed back to individual inspectors, who will be asked to make sure that any issues identified are corrected across their whole caseload. If a file is found to be unsuitable for the file sample for some reason, a replacement file will be provided.
  3. The lead inspector will monitor the progress of the file examination on a weekly basis and make sure that it does not fall behind by reassigning files to inspectors if necessary.

### File record sheet

* 1. The completion of a full FRS is not required for every case file. However, a FRS must be completed where a file requires a peer review in the case of a wholly unreasonable decision or a serious disclosure failure. A FRS may also need to be completed where examination reveals examples of particularly good or poor aspects of case handling.
  2. In non-casework file examination, a FRS is completed with any relevant details to illustrate any issues picked up or any examples of good practice. A FRS is also completed in any case where answers on the database appear to be contradictory or not in line with expectations.
  3. The FRS needs to set out a rationale for the position so that the QA can understand why when it comes to dip sampling.

### Wholly unreasonable decisions

* 1. There is a standard process in place by which files considered to be wholly unreasonable decisions against the Code for Crown Prosecutors are quality assured to verify the accuracy of the judgements.
  2. A wholly unreasonable decision is a decision made when applying the Code for Crown Prosecutors which no reasonable prosecutor could have made in the circumstances in which it was made and at the time it was made, or ought to have been made. It also applies to police decisions to charge.
  3. Legal inspectors will notify the lead inspector or the QA of any wholly unreasonable decisions against the Code as soon as they find them so they can be prioritised.
  4. The process will be carried out in accordance with the guidance. If the outcome requires a change to the file examination questionnaire for the particular case, this will be done when the process has been finalised.
  5. There is also a policy for dealing with cases that legal inspectors consider to involve a potential miscarriage of justice (that is, where a defendant might not have been convicted had the correct process been followed by the CPS) and a test to identify such cases.

### Evidence and evaluation notes

* 1. The inspector is expected to complete the EEN as the file examination progresses and in accordance with guidance from the lead inspector. The EEN records the key findings from the file reading, incorporating the data from the database.
  2. The file reading is normally completed, and the data made available for analysis, at least a week before the on-site phase begins. This enables the team to prepare the initial judgements in a timely manner, remove or add interviews to the timetable if necessary, update interview planners with any specific issues arising from the file examination, request additional data or documents and do any other work that addresses specific issues identified. This week between the completion of the file examination and the on-site phase also enables the team to carry out consistency checks on the results and quality assure the data generated.
  3. However, there may be inspections where file reading is not scheduled to be completed until after the on-site phase. This will be clear in the project plan.

## Analysis of key documents and performance data

* 1. The responsibility for analysing information provided by and received from the inspected body will vary, depending on the make-up of the team and the consequent split of responsibilities agreed by the lead inspector at the outset. All information will be read or analysed and the appropriate information shared with the relevant members of the inspection team. The range of information analysed can vary, but may include:
* documents submitted by the inspected body in response to our request (attached to the commissioning letter)
* documents and data available from the CPS or requested
* findings from the survey responses
* performance and management data provided by the BDSO
* performance information from the CPS databank.

## Early fact finding interviews

* 1. It will have been considered as part of the methodology whether to conduct short interviews with key representatives of the Area or CPS Headquarters at this stage. The purpose of early contact with external representatives and the inspected body’s staff is to seek their views on what the main issues are and identify any areas of concern. This early engagement might be effective in testing evidence coming from either the file examination or document analysis. Undertaking early fact finding interviews with stakeholders and partners can give the inspection team an insight into the key risks or concerns identified by the inspected body and those dealing with them.
  2. Given that these are early fact finding interviews, it may also be appropriate to speak with the individuals later in the process (that is, during the on-site phase), but lead inspectors must pay close attention to the inspection burden and what more could be gathered at a later date. If it is thought that interviews with key stakeholders would be more helpful after all the evidence has been assessed, then it is likely that the interviews should be conducted once during the on-site phase.
  3. If early evidence gathering interviews take place and a further interview is required, interviewees should be asked for their availability during the on-site phase and a provisional date set for a full interview. This early contact allows the inspection team to eliminate unnecessary interviews during the on-site phase if the interviewee is unable to provide the necessary information (for example, if they have only been in post for a few weeks). These interviews may be conducted over the telephone.

## Early analysis of survey results

* 1. Responses to any surveys that have been sent out to external agencies and to staff in the inspected organisation will begin to be returned during this phase. The BDSO will give the lead inspector a weekly update on the number of completed surveys received. The lead inspector will consider whether any further action is necessary to remind those asked to return the survey.
  2. A member of the inspection team may be asked to complete an initial analysis of the surveys returned to inform the pre-on-site meeting. Results will assist in focusing the work on-site.

## Completing the evidence and evaluation note

* 1. As the file reading, document examination and data analysis progress, significant findings will be entered into the relevant section of the EEN.

## Interview timetables and travel arrangements

* 1. Contact details for key external representatives will have been provided by the CPS or SFO in its response to the commissioning letter. The lead inspector will consider which representatives should be interviewed face-to face and which to contact by telephone rather than (or in addition to) online surveys or early interviews. These decisions are made in conjunction with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) or inspection QA. The choice of which representatives to ask for an interview will be entirely tailored to the scope of the inspection.
  2. Additionally, views expressed at the early engagement conversation with the senior managers may indicate particular issues with external agencies that require an early pre-on-site interview or warrant a full interview when the team is on-site.
  3. The inspection administrator works with the lead inspector to draft and dispatch interview request letters to external key representatives via email. These letters will outline the scope of the inspection and include the specific topics to be covered in the interview. A copy of the inspection framework will also be attached to the emails.
  4. Similarly, the lead inspector is responsible for deciding which CPS/SFO staff require face-to-face or telephone interviews rather than (or in addition to) the possible online survey. The lead will also decide whether to hold focus groups with different staff groups.
  5. The inspection administrator is responsible for liaising with those invited to interviews. Once these are agreed, the time and place will be recorded on the on-site timetable. The administrator will ascertain the names of all people to be interviewed during the on-site phase and will email all interviewees copies of the inspection leaflet (which explains the inspection process), the inspection framework and biographies of the inspectors who will be on site.
  6. The lead inspector will assign team members to interviews and determine accommodation requirements. The inspection administrator will book accommodation and travel according to instructions.

## Pre-on-site team meetings

* 1. A series of team meetings are likely to be scheduled during the pre-on-site phase. This will allow team members to share key knowledge and information they have gathered.
  2. A final meeting before the onsite phase is an opportunity to bring all team members up to date and ensure that all necessary work has been completed in line with the project plan. As a minimum, this pre-on-site team meeting should cover the following:
* high level outcomes from the file examination and the analysis of documents and data
* a check that the organisation being inspected has been informed of the details of the files to be reviewed under the wholly unreasonable decision procedure
* any specific areas of concern or good performance that might warrant specific attention whilst on site
* where further information or clarification is required to enable inspectors to make reliable judgements against the framework
* additional interviews to be arranged
* any further checks to be undertaken.
  1. The date for the pre-on-site team meeting should be set during the production of the project plan. All inspectors, the inspection administrator, the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and any other QA will take part in the meeting. The meeting will also finalise the timetable.

# On-site phase

Key outcomes

Interviews with external key representatives and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)/Serious Fraud Office (SFO) staff

Court observations, if necessary

Process checks, if necessary

Interviews with senior managers, if appropriate

Team meetings/keeping in touch with the team

* 1. During this phase, more evidence is gathered to inform the findings against the framework. It normally involves interviews and focus groups with a wide range of staff, both within the inspected organisation and potentially with criminal justice system partners and stakeholders, such as victims or representatives from organisations supporting stakeholders, if this has not been done during the pre-on-site phase.
  2. The length of this phase is dictated by the number of sites visited, interviews with CPS Headquarters staff, the number of interviews and on-site activities required, and the logistics within the Areas visited (such as the need to visit courts or representatives of other agencies which may be scattered throughout the geographical area). The timescales will be dictated by the project plan and agreed at the outset of the inspection, when scoping has been completed. There is not a standard timescale – the on-site period will take as long as necessary to support the effective and proportionate gathering of information to support the inspection findings.

## On-site interviews and focus groups

* 1. Being able to test the evidence from the pre-on-site file examination and analysis of documents is essential to being able to triangulate evidence, fill in any gaps and allow inspectors to reach sound judgements. The on-site phase of the inspection is where face-to-face interviews with a wide range of staff and stakeholders allow the evidence to be tested, and allow those being inspected the time and opportunity to fill any evidence gaps or provide context.
  2. Before interviews or focus groups are held, all staff attending should have received the inspection leaflet and biographies of the inspectors conducting the interview or focus group.
  3. At the start of each interview or focus group, inspectors will introduce themselves, set out the reason for the interview or focus group and make sure those involved understand the reason for the inspection. The limitations on the confidentiality we can offer those who take part in interviews or focus groups will be explained and, if any participant is not happy to go ahead on that basis, they must be given the option to leave.
  4. It is good practice to ensure that interviews or focus groups do not include a member of staff and their manager, since this may make it difficult for the participants to speak freely. (In very unusual circumstances this approach may be relaxed and the lead inspector may grant permission for the interview to include a staff member and their manager). Inspectors may record handwritten or typed notes of interviews or focus groups but care will be taken to record only the role(s) of those being interviewed and not their names.
  5. During the planning phase, when deciding who to hold face-to-face interviews and focus groups with, the overriding aim must be to make sure that we see only those who are best placed to inform the inspection. Lead inspectors need to balance the burden of taking staff away from their work on the organisation against the benefits of being able to test and gather more evidence to inform the inspection.
  6. In all cases where interviews or focus groups take place, they must be focused; questions should be tailored to the issues identified during the analysis at the pre-on-site phase and filling in any gaps identified by inspectors in the evidence and evaluation note (EEN). Whilst interviews and focus groups must be in line with the framework, inspectors must be alert to any relevant issues raised by participants which have not been identified in the documents and data.
  7. Interview notes (handwritten or typed) will be preserved for audit trail purposes and will be destroyed according to the HMCPSI retention policy – the day before publication, unless otherwise agreed with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) or Chief Inspector. Points of significant evidence should be added to the relevant section of the EEN. Care should be taken to identify the source of the evidence, usually by job title and not by their name. There will be one or two inspectors present in the interview, depending on what is appropriate.
  8. There should be enough flexibility in the methodology and on-site timetable to enable inspectors to conduct interviews that are not on the timetable. Examples of these might include speaking with defence practitioners or witness care officers at court. Written records (however brief) of these interviews will be made.
  9. There may also be occasions when the inspected body’s staff members wish to speak to inspectors one-to-one, possibly on a confidential basis. Time should be made to accommodate these requests whenever possible.

## Court observations

* 1. Court observations may form part of the on-site activity in some inspections. Such observations can be informative for judgements, particularly regarding the preparedness and proactivity of the parties involved. It is good practice to organise court observations to coincide with interviews with court staff, if applicable. Notes of key observations should be maintained and transferred to the EEN.
  2. Inspectors should try to make sure that court representatives are aware of their presence in court. Letters should be sent to relevant HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and judicial representatives during the setting up phase, alerting them of HMCPSI activity in the Area. If visits to youth courts are planned, it is necessary to obtain permission in advance from HMCTS.
  3. If notes are made regarding the observations, these should be regarded as a sensitive document. Inspectors must protect its confidentiality and comply with data protection rules.

## Process checks

* 1. The scoping/planning exercise will determine which, if any, process checks will be included as part of the on-site phase of the inspection. As with interviews and focus groups, lead inspectors need to balance the potential burden of process checks taking staff away from their day-to-day work against the benefits to the inspection of testing systems and strengthening the evidence base. Bespoke checks may need to be designed and the lead inspector will arrange these.
  2. Where there is a standard process in place, such as the Standard Operating Practice in the CPS, this should form the basis of the checks. A checklist should be drafted as part of the methodology to make sure that all systems are measured against the same criteria and to ensure consistency. This should be considered as part of the scoping and should feature in the inspection methodology.
  3. It is not expected that ad hoc process checks are carried out without proper engagement with the inspected body.

## Interviews with senior managers

* 1. It will not always be necessary to interview senior managers in the organisation being inspected. However, some Chief Crown Prosecutors (CCPs), Area Business Managers (ABMs) or SFO Division Heads may ask for some feedback at the end of the on-site visit. These requests should be accommodated where possible and emerging themes and findings shared. In delivering this feedback, inspectors will be sure not to share the source of any specific information or evidence.
  2. Some thematic inspection subjects will not require the CCP or ABM to be interviewed. Also, there may be no senior CPS representatives to share the emerging themes with whilst the team is on site. However, in these circumstances, emerging findings will be shared with a senior CPS representative who is likely to have overall responsibility for the thematic subject matter (see chapter 7).
  3. The lead inspector will attend the meeting with the CCP, ABM, other senior CPS representative responsible for the thematic subject matter, or SFO senior manager. Other inspection team members may also attend the meeting as the lead inspector sees fit.
  4. The lead inspector will liaise with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) or Chief Inspector ahead of the inspection to establish the extent of their involvement.

## Keeping in touch

* 1. Regular team meetings are beneficial as a means of reviewing progress and alerting the team to any emerging themes or issues that may need to be followed up whilst on site. If the inspection team are based in different locations, this may be more difficult, but the lead inspector will consider the best way to arrange this communication.

## Keeping evidence secure

* 1. Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), we have a duty to protect all personal data that we collect or create as part of inspection work. We also have a duty to protect the Government’s information assets, which may or may not contain personal data. This is all information produced by or shared by civil servants.
  2. All inspectors will adhere to the guidance and practices set out in the “Responsible for information” mandatory training module.
  3. There is an internal process in place to deal with a report of any lost or misplaced information. Losses are reported immediately to a member of HMCPSI’s senior management team. Details will be recorded of what the information was and where it may have been lost. The senior management team will assess whether this is a notifiable loss – that is, whether the Information Commissioner’s Office, Cabinet Office, and/or those affected by the data loss need to be notified.

# Evaluation phase

Key outcomes

Evidence and evaluation note (EEN) completed, including preliminary judgements

Team emerging findings meeting

Judgements on key national issues, initial recommendations and aspects to improve

Emerging findings document

Findings and emerging findings document quality assured

Emerging findings meeting with the inspected body

* 1. During this phase, all the evidence gathered from the file examination, the document analysis, survey results and on-site work is assimilated. Key emerging findings are identified and tested by the team and by a robust quality assurance process. Normally an emerging findings document is produced after a full team meeting, within ten days of the end of the on-site phase. A meeting is held with the inspected body, normally in the third week after the on-site phase.

## Evidence and evaluation note completion

* 1. At the start of the evaluation phase, inspectors will make sure that all relevant evidence collected has been entered into the EEN, noting the key evidence and their judgements against the framework.
  2. By the end of the evaluation phase, the EEN will be complete, setting out the team’s initial judgements on all aspects of the framework. These overall judgements are used to inform the emerging findings note. The lead inspector is responsible for producing the final emerging findings document, but other team members may be responsible for drafting specific sections.
  3. Care should be taken to make sure that any confidential information recorded in the EEN is kept to a minimum and that, where information from interviews has been added, it records the source’s job title and not the individual’s name. However, the EEN is a confidential document regardless, and steps must be taken by team members to treat it as such.

## Team emerging findings/judgements meeting

* 1. This meeting is held with all the inspection team members along with the quality assurer (QA), the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection), and the Chief Inspector. It is separate from the emerging findings meeting that may be held with the inspected body. Each team member will outline their findings (which will have been recorded in the EEN) and their views on each criterion within the framework/EEN.
  2. The meeting gives team members the opportunity to set out their views on the evidence and judgements being considered. It will be used to determine the emerging findings note and finalise the evidence and judgements that will form the basis of the final inspection report.
  3. As well as identifying issues that will form the basis of the recommendations, the meeting will seek to identify good practice or any positive work that can be either highlighted in the final inspection report or fed back at the emerging findings meeting with the inspected body.

## Evaluation of the inspection findings

* 1. The judgements from the EEN and the emerging findings meeting, together with analysis of the database findings and casework outcomes, are used to highlight good practice or where recommendations (see paragraph 8.12) need to be made. If the methodology includes a scoring matrix for each section of the framework, it should be applied at this stage.
  2. These overall judgements are used to inform the emerging findings note and draft report, including any recommendations. Where at all possible, evidence should be triangulated, with more than one corroborative support being identified. This is even more important if the evidence is to be used to support one of the key recommendations.
  3. The structure of the report will be agreed between the lead inspector and the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) at this stage.

## Emerging findings

* 1. In all inspections, an emerging findings meeting will be offered to the inspected body’s senior managers.
  2. Where a meeting takes place, an emerging findings document needs to be sent to the participants at least five working days before the meeting. The document should be succinct, focusing on the main issues identified and any likely recommendations. The emerging findings document is subject to internal quality assurance before it is supplied to the inspected body.
  3. The Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) or the Chief Inspector will attend the emerging findings meeting. The Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) will set the date for the meeting.
  4. Inspectors attending should be prepared to expand on the key points during the discussion, such as by giving specific examples, to make sure there is a good understanding of the underlying issues.
  5. If the inspected body’s senior managers do not wish to engage in an emerging findings meeting, the emerging findings document will still be produced and sent to the inspected body.
  6. The meeting gives the inspected body an early indication of the findings. If they disagree with something, they have the opportunity to present further evidence to HMCPSI to support their view. The inspection team will consider whether the evidence presented changes the judgement.

# Report writing phase

Key outcomes

Report drafted

Internal quality assurance of draft report by quality assurer (QA) → Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) →Chief Inspector

Draft report to Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Headquarters/Serious Fraud Office (SFO) for comment

CPS/SFO comments received and response drafted

Response quality assured and report amended as appropriate

Report to publications company for proofreading

Response and final report to CPS Headquarters/SFO

* 1. In this phase, inspectors prepare a draft report. The report primarily contains judgements with sufficient supporting evidence, by way of examples, to allow readers to understand how the judgements have been reached. The style of the report should be straightforward, with clear judgements and appropriate supporting evidence.
  2. This phase includes the internal quality assurance process and the finalisation of the report with the inspected body. There is no standard amount of time allowed for this stage, with every inspection being different. In inspections where there is an agreed template and it is a repeat of what has been done before, this phase should be fairly simple and need limited time. In more detailed inspections, the time needed will be determined at the outset.
  3. The report will go through the internal quality assurance process, which takes in the file examination data and any evidence to be published (survey results, for example). The draft report will be shared with the inspected body, which is normally given ten days to respond with comments on factual accuracy. The time it takes to deal with the comments and provide a response will be determined by the extent of the comments and the level of changes that need to be accommodated to produce the final draft of the report.
  4. Reports will reflect the inspection criteria; there will be a clear link between the inspection framework and the report. Whilst the level of detail in the report will not always be extensive, audit trail processes will allow the information in the evidence and evaluation note (EEN) and the data to be linked with the judgements in the report.
  5. Whilst the level of detail and emphasis in thematic inspection reports will vary depending on the findings, the structure of the report, including the chapter headings and the order in which topics should be covered, will have been agreed with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) to ensure the most appropriate structure in light of the scope and framework.
  6. Reports are drafted in the appropriate HMCPSI report template and in accordance with our house style.
  7. Whilst the judgements in thematic reports reflect performance at a national level, where appropriate, we may also detail the performance of individual Areas considered as part of the inspection. This allows those Areas with good practice or performance to be identified and those where improvement is necessary to be highlighted.
  8. All members of the inspection team will be consulted and their comments sought on the balance of judgements in the final report.

## Version control

* 1. HMCPSI follows a standard process for version control on reports, beginning with working draft versions, through consultation drafts to the final publication version.
  2. A consultation draft of the report will be sent to the appropriate contact in the inspected body, which has two weeks (ten working days) to comment on factual accuracy.
  3. Instructions on how the draft report should be handled and retained will be included in communications from HMCPSI to the inspected body. Official protective markings will be applied to the report.

## Recommendations

* 1. Where the inspection identifies significant weaknesses once all the evidence has been gathered and assessed, these weaknesses will be discussed by the inspection team during the emerging findings/judgements meeting (see chapter 7). The number and type of recommendations will differ from one inspection to another but should be:
* clear and precise
* able to be readily assessed in any future follow-up inspection
* aimed at improving performance
* specific, measurable and relevant
* cost conscious (that is, what will be the cost of implementing the recommendation? Is it proportionate to the outcome expected?)
* avoid duplication (that is, similar recommendations in different parts of the report).
  1. Recommendations cannot be made by HMCPSI for the other agencies, such as the police or courts, unless this is part of a joint inspection with the agency concerned.

## Issues to address

* 1. Recommendations represent the priority improvement activity identified by the inspection, but there may be other issues which would benefit from some attention. These can be included in the report as issues to address.
  2. The issues to address are not regarded by the inspection team with the same level of priority as recommendations. They are a means of ensuring that all areas of concern are captured in the report, with a proposal that action is necessary by the inspected body or CPS Area.
  3. The issues to address should follow the same guidance as the recommendations (see paragraph 8.12), with the expectation that they will be followed up with the organisation and that progress may be easily measured if the Area or topic is re-inspected.

## Quality assurance/consultation

* 1. Before the report is sent to the inspected body as part of the consultation process, a quality assurance procedure is applied. This involves the QA for the inspection, the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and finally the Chief Inspector.
  2. Once the Chief Inspector’s views have been taken into consideration, the lead inspector will send the draft report the inspected body. The inspected body has ten working days to respond with comments on factual accuracy. They will be provided with a template to provide their response and comments.

## Finalising the report

* 1. On receipt of the inspected body’s comments, the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and the lead inspector will co-ordinate a final version of the report, in discussion with the Chief Inspector. HMCPSI will provide a written response to all the inspected body’s comments on the report, explaining what amendments have been made or giving reasons why no change has been made. This response is returned to the inspected body with a final copy of the report within five working days.
  2. Additionally, as part of the finalisation process, when the consultation draft of the report is sent to the inspected body, the body will be offered a consultation meeting. In this meeting, the inspected body can discuss views on HMCPSI’s response to its comments, make further representations, or present evidence or other supporting information before the Chief Inspector agrees the final report. The lead inspector, Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection), Chief Inspector and, if necessary, a member of the original inspection team will be present at the consultation meeting. This meeting is optional; it is up to the inspected body to decide whether it wishes to take up the offer.
  3. At this point, the report will be sent to HMCPSI’s publishing company.
  4. When the report is finalised, either through written comments or a meeting with the inspected body, a final copy of the report is sent to the inspected body. A copy of the final report is also sent to the Attorney General’s press office.

# Publication and finalisation phase

Key outcomes

Final report to publications team

Press release drafted

Report published

Inspection folders cleared in accordance with the retention policy

Inspection evaluation exercise conducted with the team

* 1. The proofread report, with changes tracked, will be returned from the publishing company to the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and the lead inspector. The Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and lead inspector will consider any suggested changes, accepting or rejecting them as appropriate. Once the report has been signed off by the lead inspector and the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection), this is considered to be the publication version. At the very least, this phase would take three weeks.

## Press notice, stakeholder email and website summary

* 1. A list of key positive points from the report, including any issues to address, is produced after consideration of the comments received from the inspected body. This summary is supplied to the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) communications team, who use it to draft the press notice. The lead inspector, Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspection) and Chief Inspector will sign off the draft press notice, press release and web summary.
  2. The AGO press officer will be responsible for liaising with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)/Serious Fraud Office (SFO) Press Office. Three days before publication, press notices are shared between the inspected body and HMCPSI.

## Publication

* 1. Reports are distributed, embargoed, to relevant stakeholders and the press to give advance notice before publication. On the day of publication, the Business Support Team will arrange for distribution of the report and website summary, and notify those stakeholders and other interested parties identified during the inspection that the report has been published.
  2. Reports are distributed electronically, directly to relevant stakeholders or by notification that a report has been added to the HMCPSI website. In appropriate circumstances, reports can be made available in alternative formats. Where the inspection has involved interviews with external representatives, or where external representatives have been asked to complete a survey, a thank you letter will be sent to these representatives with a link to the report on the day of publication.
  3. The report and the web summary are added to the HMCPSI website.

## At the end of the inspection

* 1. It is HMCPSI policy that, on the publication of a report, all key records and documents are deleted from our IT system. The policy provides an audit trail and a schedule of documents that will be kept after publication. It can assist with any challenge or clarification that is received up to the point of publication.
  2. The Records Management Officer will maintain the overall ongoing management of inspection documentation, including dealing with archiving and destruction.
  3. The lead inspector will make sure that only documents required by the retention policy are kept.

## Post-inspection review

* 1. After the report has been published, feedback is gathered from the inspection team on what went well and what requires improvement. This is usually sought at a team evaluation meeting.
  2. Any learning points or positive aspects will be relayed to the methodology lead, who will consider applying them to improve future inspections. If points are accepted, this handbook will be updated accordingly and all staff will be notified.
  3. HMCPSI will maintain a record of all lessons learned. This record will be available to inform the methodology used in future inspections.

## Ongoing monitoring

* 1. Key contacts in the SFO and CPS discuss progress against recommendations with the Deputy Chief Inspector (Inspections).

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1. Whilst HMCPSI will inspect some aspects of resource management, we are not responsible for financial auditing. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Under COVID-19 restrictions, visits are now mainly conducted remotely, using Microsoft Teams to conduct interviews and focus groups. This replicates the face to face interviews and meetings that would have been conducted during visits to offices. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)